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SOUTHERN ILLINOIS



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Southern Illinois

Have a wild time in Southern Illinois. There's a national forest down here that stretches clear across the state. Backpack, ride horseback or hike the hills and dales. Hunt deer, explore caves yawning above the Ohio River and ghostly old river boom towns. Feel the black mud of the Great American Bottomland between your toes. Get yourself south. And let yourself go.

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▽ Shawnee Forest offers 250,000 wild acres

They call it "Little Egypt." Down there where the Illinois, Kaskaskia, Wabash and Ohio rivers meet, where the waters rise and churn, carving out islands. Beyond the river bluffs, things get high, wild and rugged—all 250,000 beautiful acres of it known as the Shawnee National Forest. For ten thousand years man has made it home. He left rock carvings, cave paintings and prehistoric stoneforts to excite the imaginations of campers, hikers and archaeologists. Today, he gathers Wyeths and Picassos into the excellent turn-of-the-century collection of the Mitchell Art Museum in Mt. Vernon.

Parts of the old French settlements have succumbed to floods, but their heritage is firmly entrenched in names and ruins, forts and festivals. The earthworks of Fort Kaskaskia remain high on a bluff with the lovely old Pierre Menard home. Fort Massac is being restored to glory as the last French stronghold on the Ohio. The 1756 stone fortress of Fort de Chartres is partially reconstructed; it was the last fort in North America to lower the French flag.

A bank in lusty Old Shawneetown once refused a loan to fledgling Chicago because it was "too far away to ever amount to anything." Twenty miles south, Cave-in-Rock provides a spectacular view of the Ohio River that was much appreciated by river pirates.

While Vandalia survived 19 stormy, slave-issue years as the state capital, iron furnaces were supplying armor for Civil War battleships like the Monitor. And plantations like those along Smoky Row near Cairo held to Confederate sentiments. Even today, along the flat, black river bottoms, a little of the Old South clings to the magnolias.

You'll find peace at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Belleville, joy in wild places like Crab Orchard National Refuge and Giant City State Park. There is, in fact, something very special in the whole of Southern Illinois.



A. GREENBERG



△ A Cahokia archaeologist digs for clues



▷ Vandalia State House, restored as in 1838

▽ Camel Rock oversees the Garden of the Gods



▷ Sail 19,000-acre
Rend Lake



▷ Fort de Chartres
Rendezvous
revives the
French era



△ Fern Clyffe State Park lures campers south



△ An early pioneer iron furnace



△ Outdoor altar, Our Lady of the Snows Shrine

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